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One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

April 3, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pence
The Vice President
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
Washington, DC 20501

Dear Mr. Vice President:

There is mounting evidence that the critical shortages of surgical masks and other personal protective equipment are being exacerbated by the unregulated export of such medical supplies from the United States. There are first-hand news reports of traders and profiteers diverting these supplies to the highest bidder overseas and away from our physicians, nurses, and first responders who are risking their lives to treat Americans with life-threatening viral infections.

Despite this alarming development, the White House Task Force on the Coronavirus has taken no steps to order the national regulation of personal protective equipment.

The Administration has all the tools it needs to act swiftly to impose strict controls on the export of these health care items. The Federal Government has ample authority to regulate exports, including under the Export Control Reform Act and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, both of which fall under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

I urge you to use the authority that Congress has provided to bring the supply of personal protective equipment under Federal regulation, including the immediate imposition of a requirement for a license for any export of such equipment. An order should be given immediately to our customs officers at the ports of embarkation to seize any outbound shipments of this equipment until the Federal Government imposes a system for priority allocation to the U.S. health care infrastructure and personnel. Once our critical domestic needs are met, a

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licensing mechanism can be used to make careful decisions about sharing with other countries in dire need.

The trajectory of this pandemic in the United States is showing us what happens when government simply stands aside despite having ample time to prepare. Now we see the diversion of health care equipment by profiteers while our medical personnel risk their lives to save the American people who are at risk in this emergency. You can act. You must do so without further delay.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman